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ABSTRACT

The Australian Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) established the Taskforce on Indigenous Education to address issues of educational inequity for aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It had a number of terms of reference, including providing advice to Ministers on making these issues a matter of urgent national priority. This discussion paper is a result of Taskforce consultative actions in raising the profile of Indigenous education and highlighting the need to improve educational equity. The Taskforce commends this paper and encourages all involved in the education of Indigenous students to explore the issues raised and to foster greater progress. Appendix 1 describes the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy; Appendix 2 is the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999); Appendix 3 is an extract from draft minutes on the 10th MCEETYA 1999 decision; Appendix 4 is a Taskforce membership list; Appendix 5 gives Taskforce terms of reference; Appendix 6 is statistical details; Appendix 7 gives different perspectives on the nature and purpose of education; Appendix 8 reports preliminary outcomes of strategic results projects; and Appendix 9 states the 1992 COAG National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. (Contains 36 references.) (RT)

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MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Discussion Paper

Achieving Educational Equality for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education

Revised
April 2000

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Discussion Paper

Achieving Educational Equality for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education

Revised
April 2000

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FOREWORD

At its 10th meeting in April 1999, all Australian Ministers of Education through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), established the Taskforce on Indigenous Education to undertake a range of work and to report in 2000. The Taskforce had a number of terms of reference, including: *providing advice to Ministers on making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority.*

In November 1999, the Taskforce released a discussion paper in relation to this Term of Reference for consultation within jurisdictions and Indigenous communities. The consultations concluded in late February 2000 and showed that there was strong 'in principle' support for the general directions provided by the paper.

Consultations also showed that the discussion paper proved very useful in raising the profile of Indigenous education and highlighting the need to make the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority.

The discussion paper was revised in light of the consultation comments and further discussions by the Taskforce and was used to inform the Taskforce's report to MCEETYA in March 2000.

At its 11th meeting in March 2000, MCEETYA approved the printing and circulation of the revised discussion paper for this Term of Reference 1 with a view to encouraging further discussion on Indigenous education issues and to promoting the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples.

The Taskforce commends this paper and encourages all those involved in the education of Indigenous students to explore the issues raised and to foster greater progress.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The scale of educational inequality remains vast for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and continues, despite considerable work particularly over the last decade by all governments.

Two important and identifiable phases of work have been undertaken to support the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous students. The first phase was the establishment of national commitment to a raft of policy in Indigenous education. In the second phase, Indigenous education led the way in establishing an outcomes-based approach in Australian education. However progress in achieving equality in educational outcomes has been slower than anticipated.

At its 10th meeting in April 1999, MCEETYA established the Taskforce on Indigenous Education to undertake a range of work and to report in 2000. The Taskforce had three terms of reference:

1. provide advice to Ministers on making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority;
2. enhancing the current performance and monitoring framework for the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP);
3. provide advice to the Commonwealth on the development of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the National Indigenous Students' School Attendance Strategy.

The Taskforce reported on all three terms of reference to MCEETYA in March 2000.

In relation to Term of Reference 1, the Taskforce identified the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples as a realistic goal and identified a number of issues that are impeding the achievement of educational equality. The Taskforce has developed a number of mechanisms to address these issues and recommends that a third phase of work is needed to accelerate progress.

The Taskforce has developed and recommends for implementation:

- a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery;
- a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools, and
- a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

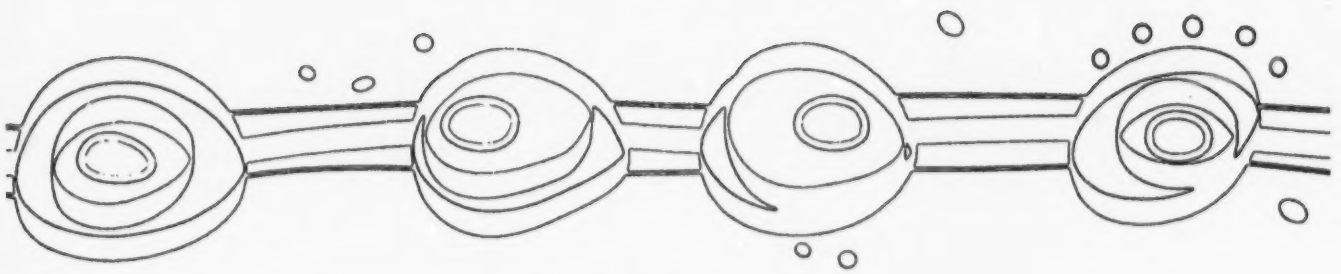
To manage the scope of its references, particularly Term of Reference 1, the Taskforce focussed on the schooling sector. Nevertheless, discussions throughout the year indicated the need to extend its work into the early childhood, vocational education and training, and higher education sectors.

The Taskforce proposes that it report back to Council in 2001 on:

- progress with implementation of the statement of principles and standards, the model for culturally inclusive schools, and the cross-portfolio framework;
- further advice on making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority in the early childhood, vocational education and training, and higher education sectors.

Chapter One

Introduction



This chapter describes the establishment of the Taskforce and the two phases of work that has been undertaken by Australian governments over the last decade to support the achievement of educational equality of Indigenous Australians. The Taskforce recommends a third phase of work to accelerate progress.

Background

In the last decade, Australian governments have introduced a number of measures to achieve educational equality for Indigenous Australians. Two important and identifiable phases of work were undertaken to support the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous students. The first phase was the establishment of national commitment to a raft of policy in Indigenous education. In the second phase, Indigenous education led the way in establishing an outcomes-based approach in Australian education.

Phase One—National Policy

In 1989, Australian governments, through the Australian Education Council, introduced the Hobart Declaration on Schooling which described ten common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia, including:

- to provide an excellent education for all young people, being one which develops their talents and capacities to full potential, and is relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the nation (Goal 1);
- to respond to the current and emerging economic and social needs of the nation, and to provide those skills which will allow students maximum flexibility and adaptability in their future employment and other aspects of life (Goal 4);
- to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context (Goal 7).

In addition, in 1989, the Council introduced the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) to come into effect from 1 January 1990. The AEP sets out twenty-one long-term goals with the objective of achieving educational equality by the year 2000. In particular, the AEP establishes as the standard for Indigenous Australians, the level of educational access, participation and outcomes achieved by other Australians. The AEP refutes the notion that a gap in access, participation and educational outcomes between Indigenous and other Australians is 'normal'.

The twenty-one goals of the AEP relate to four themes:

- involvement of Indigenous people in educational decision-making;
- achievement of equality of access to educational services;
- achievement of equality of educational participation;
- achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

The full list of twenty-one goals of the AEP is at **Appendix 1.**

In 1993, Ministers undertook a review of the effectiveness of the AEP in its first triennium to improve access, participation and equitable and the achievement of appropriate educational outcomes. When the review reported in 1995, it was clear that access and participation rates had

improved but the scale of educational inequality still remained vast for Indigenous Australians. In addition, the 1995 National Review described a range of barriers that continue to contribute to educational inequality for Indigenous peoples.

The National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1996-2002) built on the recommendations of the 1995 National Review and recommended reforms in the implementation, evaluation and arrangements relating to the twenty-one goals of the AEP.

The strategy outlined eight priority areas for each sector of education:

1. to establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making;
2. to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in education and training;
3. to ensure equitable access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to education and training services;
4. to ensure participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education and training;
5. to ensure equitable and appropriate educational achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
6. to promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, cultures and languages to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students;
7. to provide community development training services including proficiency in English literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults;
8. to improve AEP implementation, evaluation and resourcing arrangements.

The strategy provides the basis for the current operational plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education units in State/ Territory government education and training systems.

In 1996, the ANTA Ministerial Council formally endorsed the establishment of the ANTA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council to advise the ANTA Board on Indigenous peoples' training matters.

Phase Two—Shift to Outcomes Focus

Following the 1995 National Review, Ministers of Education, through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, reaffirmed their commitment to the AEP, established a number of priority areas and agreed to an outcomes focus for this work. The priorities for the Council were in areas such as literacy and numeracy, involving Indigenous parents in their children's education, employment of Indigenous education workers, appropriate professional development of staff, increasing the enrolments of Indigenous students, expanding culturally inclusive curricula and involvement of Indigenous Australians in educational decision-making.

Ministers agreed to ensure significant continuous improvements to achieve outcomes for Indigenous Australians similar to those of non-Indigenous Australians. The Council also agreed to review, by the year 2000, progress towards achieving its objective that literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students be similar to those of non-Indigenous students.

Further, Ministers agreed in 1997 to a National Literacy and Numeracy Goal, ie that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level, and that every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

To increase the focus on progressing the national Indigenous education agenda, Ministers agreed in May 1998 to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education as a permanent item on the Council's agenda and to forward relevant documents and reports for Ministerial consideration.

In 1998, ANTA Ministerial Council endorsed a new national strategy for vocational education and training for the years 1998-2003, which has as one of its objectives, achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training.

In 1999, consistent with MCEETYA's previous decision regarding the National Literacy and Numeracy Goal, Ministers committed to ensuring that all Indigenous children leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level, and that every Indigenous child commencing school from 1998 should achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

In 1999, Ministers also agreed to the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century, which states that 'Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision'. In particular, the Adelaide Declaration underlines the capacity of all young people to learn, the role of parents as the first educators of their children, the achievement of educational standards, especially in literacy and numeracy, and the need for schooling to be socially just. The full text of the Adelaide Declaration is provided in **Appendix 2**.

In 1999, the Commonwealth Government announced the establishment of a Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, to advise on the scope and direction of a Youth Pathways Action Plan. The Taskforce comprises members from the community sector, business, academia, and State and Commonwealth governments. The plan will aim to improve support for young people and their families during young people's transition to independence, and strengthen pathways for those who do not proceed straight from school to further study or full-time employment. The Taskforce is to report to Government in June 2000.

Establishment of Taskforce

At its 10th meeting in April 1999, the Council established the Taskforce on Indigenous Education to undertake a range of work and to report in 2000 (decision for *Agenda Item 1.5* at **Appendix 3**). The Taskforce had a strong cross-sectoral focus and comprised representatives from both government and non-government sectors, as well as a representative from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and one of the Indigenous educational consultative bodies. A list of the membership of the Taskforce is at **Appendix 4**.

The Taskforce has three broad terms of reference as follows, with full terms of reference at **Appendix 5**:

- provide advice to Ministers on making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority;
- enhancing the current performance and monitoring framework for the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP);
- provide advice to the Commonwealth on the development of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the National Indigenous Students' School Attendance Strategy.

The Taskforce noted that its work needed to avoid duplication and yet be consistent with approaches taken by a number of other MCEETYA Taskforces including the Taskforce on VET in Schools, Benchmarking Taskforce (Literacy and Numeracy), National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce and the Taskforce for Rural and Remote Education, Training and Children's

Services, as well as the work of the Human Rights Commission Inquiry into rural/remote issues and the CESCEO Early Childhood Working Party.

The Taskforce acknowledged the broad scope of the work and the difficulty of the task and the need to build on the work undertaken at a national level especially over the last decade. To manage the scope of its references, the Taskforce established a sub-group for each term of reference and focussed on the schooling sector. Nevertheless, discussions throughout the year indicated the need to extend this work into the early childhood and vocational education and training sectors, and the higher education sectors.

Findings

The Taskforce has identified the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples as a realistic goal.

Central to the Taskforce's work was the development of a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery, specifically referred to in the Council's decision of April 1999.

The statement of principles and standards is described and discussed in **Chapter 2.**

At the same time, the Taskforce undertook a range of other work within Term of Reference 1 and developed a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools; and a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms. These mechanisms are described in **Chapters 3 and 4.**

The Taskforce undertook consultations between late 1999 and early 2000 on a discussion paper providing advice in relation to Term of Reference 1. The consultation mechanisms varied across jurisdictions and included advice from senior management, school principals, district officers, program managers and Indigenous education consultative bodies.

Proposal for a Way Forward

Despite considerable work over the last decade, progress in achieving educational equality has been slower than anticipated. The Taskforce has identified a number of issues that are impeding the achievement of educational equality. These issues include:

- lingering perceptions and mindsets in some quarters of the Australian community that the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students is 'normal' and that educational equality for Indigenous Australians is either not achievable, or if possible, only achievable over a long period of time (ie decades or generations);
- a systemic lack of optimism and belief in educational success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The provision and delivery of educational services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at the local level often varies according to expectations of the ability of Indigenous students to achieve academically;
- concerns that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers are denied access to facilities and services that other teachers and education workers take for granted and which are covered by legislation especially those relating to occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity and racial vilification;
- education of Indigenous students is often not regarded as an area of core business. Indigenous programmes are often marginalised, with little movement between Indigenous and mainstream programme;

- initiatives that develop more effective models of education which build on, replicate and sustain progress in the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous students often fail to be implemented systemically and/or at the local level;
- acknowledgement of a close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure, but there is a lack of efficient and effective mechanisms to address cross-portfolio issues for Indigenous students;
- schools need to work better with parents of Indigenous students to develop strong partnerships that progress high standards of education and ensure active involvement in the decision-making processes.

The Taskforce recommends for implementation:

- a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery;
- a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools; and
- a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

The Taskforce is of the view that it would be useful if it continued for a further period so as to provide advice to Council in 2001 on:

- progress with implementation of the statement of principles and standards, the model for culturally inclusive schools, and the cross-portfolio framework;
- further advice on making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority in the early childhood, vocational education and training, and higher education sectors.

The current Taskforce is well placed to undertake this work.

This third phase of work would build on and further the goals of the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999) and a number of goals relating to access, participation and educational outcomes of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (Goals 1, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15).

This third phase of work is designed to drive change at a number of levels by focussing on:

- improving literacy, numeracy, attendance and retention;
- implementing culturally inclusive practice in the school workplace, curriculum and classroom;
- ensuring greater Indigenous presence in the school;
- establishing better partnerships with Indigenous people;
- providing the basis for more effective collaboration of personnel within agencies and across agencies.

Consultation Comments

The Taskforce undertook consultations within their jurisdictions and with some Indigenous communities on a number of aspects in this report, through a discussion paper for Term of Reference 1. There was strong 'in principle' support for the general directions provided by this report and for undertaking and reporting on implementation. The consultations indicate that it is important to continue to maintain the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous students as an urgent national priority in 2000.

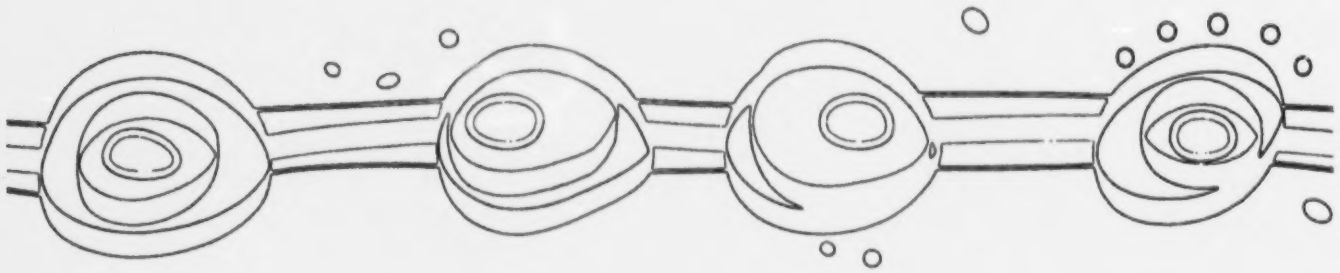
It is clear from the consultations that the advice provided in this report is in a sufficiently generic format to promote local flexibility, but there is a need for a range of sub-strategies to be

developed. In particular, jurisdictions need to work within existing protocols and at the local level with their educational institutions, parents and caregivers, Indigenous communities and the wider community to establish local strategies.

The Taskforce is of the view that it would be useful to print and widely disseminate the revised discussion paper. The discussion paper has proved very useful in raising the profile of Indigenous education and highlighting the need to make the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority.

CHAPTER TWO

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS



This chapter describes the work of the Taskforce to address Term of Reference 1 (f) and define a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery. The chapter looks at a range of mindsets and perceptions and concerns about variations in standards that slow down progress to achieve educational equality.

Introduction

The history of government policy and practice in Australia and its interaction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has often been based on the premise that educational inequality is 'normal'. Work over recent decades to achieve educational equality for Indigenous Australians has failed to completely eliminate this perception.

All Australians have the right to an education which allows them to be strong in two ways: to be strong in their own cultures, and to be strong in the skills that allows them equal choice from the same range of opportunities and futures.

Achieving this right for Indigenous Australians remains one of the principal educational challenges facing this nation.

This chapter proposes that longstanding issues relating to mindsets and misperceptions, and to variations in the standard of educational infrastructure and service delivery must be addressed by promoting a Statement of Principles and Standards to underpin the delivery of more culturally inclusive schooling in the 21st century.

The Taskforce is of the view that promoting and implementing the Statement would address the common perception that the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students is 'normal' and that achieving educational equality for Indigenous peoples is not achievable, or if it is achievable, that it will take decades if not generations. The Statement addresses the considerable variations in standards in educational infrastructure and service delivery to Indigenous students and also emphasises the need to adopt a relentless and urgent approach to achieving the goals of the Adelaide Declaration.

Mindsets, perceptions and standards

The scale of educational inequality remains vast for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and continues. A selection of statistics describing the level of educational inequality for Indigenous Australians are provided in **Appendix 6**.

Because educational inequality has persisted for so long, there is a perception in some quarters of the Australian community that achieving educational equality for Indigenous people is too hard and not achievable, or if it is achievable, that it will take a very long time: if it was simple and quick, it would have been done already.

There is also a perception in some quarters that public expenditure on Indigenous education strategies and programmes is not achieving its goals and that the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students should be considered 'normal' at a national level. For example, in many parts of Australia, it is considered 'normal' for Indigenous Australians of schooling age not to successfully complete twelve years of schooling or their equivalent in terms of a mix of general and vocational education and training.

The degree to which this gap is considered 'normal' reflects to some extent the history of government in Australia and its interaction with this nation's first inhabitants.

At the school level, there is a strong and clear relationship between family background, socio-economic status and geographical location on one hand, and patterns of educational achievement on the other. For example, in many jurisdictions, the participation rates of compulsory-school aged children is lower in rural and remote locations.

This pattern of educational achievement is further exacerbated by considerable variations in standards in educational infrastructure and service delivery to Indigenous students across Australia. For example, there is variable access to post-primary schooling and many parents of Indigenous students have no choice but to send their children away to boarding school. Standards of teacher provision, levels of teacher qualifications and professional development, cross-cultural awareness and information and communication technology support often also vary.

There is also concern about variations in the implementation of relevant Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation relating to occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, racial vilification, services for disabled students, and the delivery of education services in general. Though the evidence is limited, there are concerns that Australian Indigenous teachers and other Australian Indigenous education workers are denied access to facilities and services that other teachers and education workers take for granted and which are covered by legislation. The impact of relevant Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation on Australian Indigenous teachers and other Indigenous education workers needs to be considered to address these concerns.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) pointed out that the source of these problems lay in the history of government policy and practice of non-Indigenous Australia, which was postulated on the inferiority of Indigenous people and which has developed on the assumption that government knew what was good for Indigenous people.

This history, together with the break-up of Indigenous families and communities, the loss of Indigenous culture, the demise of many languages, racial harassment and violence and the impact of a culturally exclusive school curriculum, has contributed to the lack of interest and distrust of many Indigenous communities towards education and has entrenched poor educational outcomes as an expectation for Indigenous peoples. This situation is exacerbated in many schools where migrant children are helped to be fluent in Standard Australian English—the language of the classroom, but this assistance is not extended to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for whom Standard Australian English is also a foreign language.

Many Indigenous students come to schooling with little or none of the cultural capital that their non-Indigenous peers take for granted. Certainly, many Indigenous students bring with them rich knowledge of, and familiarity with, Indigenous culture and its institutions, but this cultural competence has little currency in systems of education. On the other hand, many Indigenous students are poor in their own Indigenous cultural capital and do not value their cultural background often because of the break-up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and the breakdown in the Elder teaching process.

Furthermore, many parents, caregivers and Indigenous communities have low expectations of their Indigenous children achieving educational success. This is reflected in the failure of many parents and caregivers to encourage their Indigenous children to attend school regularly and to support them in achieving competence in literacy and numeracy.

Proposal

To address these issues, the Taskforce has developed a Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21st Century and recommends to Council that the Statement be promoted and implemented as a framework for action.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR MORE CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

All Australians have the democratic right to an education that allows them a fair share of the social goods of education, ie. the right to participate fully in society as respected equals and to be able to choose from the same range of opportunities and futures as other Australians.

This democratic right to an education that prepares Indigenous Australians for a future in the 21st century has been supported by a range of national policy statements over the last decade: the Hobart Declaration on Schooling (1989), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP, 1989), the National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1996-2002) and the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999).

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999) states that 'Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision ... Governments set the public policies that ... safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling'.

In particular, the Adelaide Declaration underlines the capacity of all young people to learn and the role of parents as the first educators of their children.

The Declaration also underlines the need to increase public confidence in school education 'through the establishment of explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated'.

In addition, the Adelaide Declaration states that schooling should be socially just, so that:

- 'students outcomes from schooling are free from the negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic isolation' (3.1);
- 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve, and over time, match those of other students' (3.3);
- 'all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training' (3.6);

and in terms of curriculum, 'students should be numerate and able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level'.

The Adelaide Declaration, the AEP and the work over the last decade provides a framework for accelerating the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians, in which the principles underpinning the education of Indigenous Australians are affirmed and more importantly a number of key standards are established.

PRINCIPLES

Principles are described in terms of the right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to high-quality schooling and the rights and responsibilities of parents as the first educators of their children.

1. Schooling acknowledges the capacity of all young Indigenous people to learn by:

   1.1 providing a climate that welcomes and values all Indigenous students and that expects and supports them to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;

1.2 establishing effective teaching/learning relationships between the educator and the Indigenous learner;

1.3 enrolling all compulsory-aged Indigenous children and expecting all Indigenous children to attend school regularly, be actively engaged and participate in a meaningful and confident manner;

1.4 expecting all Indigenous children to be fluent in Standard Australian English and at the same time being inclusive of the student's home language;

1.5 increasing the numbers of Indigenous people across all staffing levels and increasing the involvement of community members in the school;

1.6 providing a curriculum which:

(i) is free from the negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from Indigenous students' socio-economic background or geographic isolation,

(ii) allows Indigenous students to share in the same educational opportunities experienced by other Australian students and at the same time allows them to be strong in their own culture and language and reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles in a way which affirms identity and the ability to operate in cross-cultural situations,

(iii) supports all students to understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;

2. Schooling acknowledges the role of Indigenous parents as the first educators of their children by:

2.1 providing a climate that welcomes Indigenous parents and caregivers as valuable members of the school community;

2.2 actively increasing public confidence in education and training through a process of explicit involvement of Indigenous parents/caregivers and community in the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;

2.3 supporting parents and caregivers of Indigenous students in their responsibilities to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

3. Schooling acknowledges the close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure by developing cross-portfolio mechanisms to address these issues.

STANDARDS

Standards are described in terms of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their teachers and education workers to access the same level of government services as other Australians and to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

1. Schooling is socially just when education facilities and services are provided by governments which:

1.1 are locally accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;

1.2 are built and maintained to the same standard for Indigenous students as for other Australian children in the State/Territory;

1.3 address the teaching practice and classroom acoustic requirements of hearing impaired Indigenous students;

1.4 provide all Indigenous students with access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training;

1.5 allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disabilities, especially hearing impairments, to access specialist services and support at a level and quality considered appropriate for non-Indigenous students with similar disabilities;

1.6 ensure that teachers and other education workers involved in providing services to Indigenous students have the same level of qualifications as is required for teaching other Australian students in that State/ Territory;

1.7 ensure that the same level of educational infrastructure, facilities, services and professional development is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers as is available to other teachers and education workers in that State/ Territory;

1.8 ensure that all teachers and education workers involved in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participate in effective training in cross-cultural pedagogy and ESL;

1.9 ensure that all education and training advisory, management and review committees at a system level or in schools with Indigenous students have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership.

2. Governments ensure that high-quality, accredited and culturally inclusive education and training opportunities are provided in prisons, youth detention centres and other juvenile justice programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

3. Schooling will accelerate the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when:

3.1 all Indigenous children achieve National Goals in Literacy and Numeracy by:

(i) leaving primary school numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level,

(ii) meeting the national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy,

3.2 attendance rates for Indigenous students across all levels of schooling are comparable to the rates of their non-Indigenous peers;

3.3 participation rates to year 12 or its equivalent for Indigenous students are comparable to the rates of their non-Indigenous peers.

Consultation Comments

The Taskforce undertook consultations on the Statement within their jurisdictions and with some Indigenous communities and found that there was strong support for the Statement, especially for its capacity to build on and further the goals of the Adelaide Declaration and a number of the goals of the AEP.

Many of the principles and standards seemed self-evident. Nevertheless, it was clear from the consultations that promoting and implementing the Statement would address a widespread and often systemic lack of optimism and belief in educational success for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

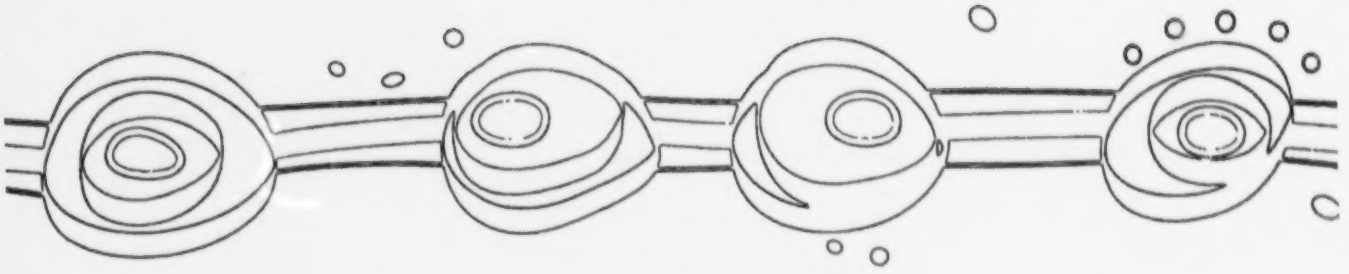
The consultations indicated that promoting and distributing the Statement was not seen to be resource intensive and could be accommodated within existing resources or by redirecting other capacities. However, the implementation of the principles and standards has resource implications, including for staff professional development, and may require some redirection of current resources. In some jurisdictions, implementation also has implications for capital works and maintenance programmes.

To support the Statement of Principles and Standards, the Taskforce recommends to Council that jurisdictions:

- approve the Statement of Principles and Standards as a framework for action in all jurisdictions. It is clear from the consultations that a range of local mechanisms and milestones need to be urgently developed and implemented;
- print, distribute and promote the Statement of Principles and Standards in year 2000 through staff training and development processes, to all teachers and education workers, especially those involved in the education of Indigenous students. In addition, it was clear from the consultations that promoting the Statement to Indigenous communities may address the strong concern about the number of compulsory-school aged Indigenous people who are not and have never been enrolled in school;
- promote in year 2000, the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century to teachers and education workers involved in the education of Indigenous students, especially through staff training and development processes, and to Indigenous communities, emphasising the urgent nature of achieving the goals. The Taskforce found that many people involved in the education of Indigenous students were unaware of the implications of the National Goals, particularly those relating to social justice (Goals 3.1 to 3.6).

CHAPTER THREE

CORE BUSINESS



This chapter describes further work undertaken by the Taskforce in relation to Term of Reference 1, especially parts c) and d) and in relation to ensuring that educational equality for Indigenous students is a mainstream priority. The chapter in particular describes a model for developing a more culturally inclusive and educationally effective school culture that is capable of integrating the successful outcomes of specific Indigenous education programmes into mainstream schooling practice.

Introduction

There are a range of ongoing difficulties in ensuring that the education of Indigenous students is regarded as an area of core business within jurisdictions.

For decades, education systems have been conducting compensatory programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to provide additional support. While these programmes have been responsible for the considerable progress made in Indigenous educational achievements, they often had two unintended side-effects: first, they marginalise the target group and the personnel who implement the programmes, and second, they become the focus of perceptions about unfair access to additional resources.

These side-effects have led to the development of a mystique about the pedagogy and the policy and goals on which the Indigenous programmes are based, which places them outside the general mainstream domain and reinforces the separateness and marginalisation.

The result is that while there is often considerable activity and progress and successful outcomes within the compensatory programme, there is often little movement in building on these programme outcomes in the mainstream domain and the core areas of commitment within the education system.

For example, initiatives that develop more effective models of education which build on, replicate and sustain progress in the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous students often fail to be implemented systemically and/or at the local level.

This marginalisation is often exacerbated by difficulties in identifying at a local level any gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes that funding from compensatory programmes can target to accelerate the closure of this gap.

Finally, initiatives to develop a culturally inclusive curriculum often fail to address levels of racial harassment and violence, the diversity of student learning needs, the different perspectives that Indigenous people have about the nature and purpose of education and the different views and choices that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make in mainstream education. Within many Indigenous communities there is a strong, but not unreserved, recognition of the importance and value of formal education and training. These issues often surface in the difficulties that many Indigenous students experience in successfully negotiating the pathways from school to work. Further details are provided in **Appendix 7**.

A Model Of More Culturally Inclusive And Educationally Effective Schools

Recent work in developing more effective models of education and in achieving equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous students has provided considerable information about building a school culture that is more educationally effective and more inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

There are a number of consistent elements that contribute to improving student learning outcomes. When these elements are viewed together with the Statement of Principles and Standards, they provide a useful model of more culturally inclusive and educationally effective school culture within which the successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes such as the 1998–99 IESIP Strategic Results Projects and the like could be absorbed into mainstream schooling practice to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous students. Many of the Strategic Results Projects have demonstrated the potential to accelerate the achievement of educational equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Further details on the Strategic Results Projects are in **Appendix 8**.

The Taskforce has designed the following model to clarify the conditions in which change is most likely to occur and determine the elements that will assist in creating sustainable change and improvement. This model is likely to be transferable between schools and systems.

A MODEL OF MORE CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE AND EDUCATIONALLY EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

This model is based on a number of findings from recent work to improve the nature of schooling and improve educational outcomes for students. It is designed for use by schools and systems as a means of creating sustainable change and improvement that integrates the successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes into mainstream schooling practice.

There are three focus areas: community, school and classroom, and each focus area has a number of elements that need to be addressed:

- Community: Partnership arrangements (including teachers and parents), Decision making, Planning, Accountability;
- School: Leadership and coordination, Environment, Organisation, Professional development, Curriculum, Monitoring, assessment and reporting;
- Classroom: Teaching strategies, Learning styles, Classroom organisation, Standards and targets, Intervention/ additional assistance.

The community

The school community needs to have a common understanding regarding the importance of adopting new, and well-documented approaches to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students.

The school community must be proactive on behalf of students and systematically link with the home, the previous school, other service providers and the wider community. The school community acknowledges the close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure by developing cross-portfolio mechanisms to address these issues.

A strong partnership between the school and community will closely support Indigenous parents and care-givers to jointly progress the standards of education and to be actively involved in the decision-making processes and planning for the introduction of new programmes. Partners who have a common understanding about why decisions have been taken and how decisions are to be implemented are more likely to promote changes proposed and accept the accountability requirements involved, including monitoring and reporting back to the community. This stronger partnership between the school and parents and caregivers of Indigenous students will be reflected in improvements in academic achievement and more regular attendance for Indigenous students.

The school

Leadership and coordination

The integration into the mainstream school programme of new, successful and well documented approaches to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students will rely heavily on the leadership

and commitment of the leadership team. Ideally the school leaders will take direct responsibility for the introduction of new programmes or approaches and/or strongly support a colleague who has been given the responsibility for introducing the initiative. There needs to be a consistent understanding of school priorities and the importance of a new initiative in these priorities.

A fundamental requirement of the leadership team is that it assist everyone affected by the introduction of a new approach to be aware of its impact elsewhere and its potential for improving outcomes within the school/ community. A collective understanding of the importance of a change, especially in schools with only a small number of Indigenous students, is essential for coordinating the effort to bring that change about within the school and community, and in ensuring that the change is sustainable.

Environment

Settings that support genuine learning and achievement for Indigenous students and in which issues of concern are dealt with quickly and effectively will be flexible and stimulating.

Engagement is regarded as the most influential factor in school improvement. Integral to engagement is relationships: teachers with students, teachers with each other, teachers with parents, the school with the community, students with students and the student with the curriculum.

A safe and supportive school/community environment gives a greater chance of success in sustainable change. Ideally this environment will reflect care, respect and concern for the needs of others in the every day practices of students, educators and administrators.

The effective integration of successful approaches to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students will rely on trust and the involvement of key stakeholders in establishing, implementing and monitoring common and agreed codes of conduct and operating procedures.

Organisation

Schools and communities need to ensure that flexible structures and resourcing prevail that enable Indigenous students to participate in a range of high-quality learning experiences. This will necessarily require schools to look at the allocation of time, staff and resources.

Flexibility can take on a variety of meanings, but is best described as a relentlessness of educators to do whatever it takes to improve student achievement and rapidly accommodate to changed circumstances.

Initiatives and approaches need to be seen within an organisational framework that is responsive to needs and circumstances, and creative in use of time, productivity and effectiveness.

Professional development

Opportunities need to be provided to educators and others involved in integrating a new approach for Indigenous students, to attend off-site and on-site professional development as part of a team to ensure leadership in discussion within the school/community.

The team leader needs to be the focal point for implementation and monitoring of the change/s proposed. At the same time the team members need to assume responsibility for each other's growth in the introduction of a new approach.

Standards and targets

A common framework of standards is a pre-condition for improving Indigenous student learning outcomes, with high expectations being made explicit in the setting of specific targets for the school and the students. The potential for a successful approach to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students to contribute to the achievement of particular targets increases the likelihood that the approach will be sustained or replicated in that setting. The Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21st Century makes explicit the standards that Indigenous students should achieve.

Curriculum

A successful approach to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students needs to be integral to the implementation of a dynamic and responsive curriculum that contributes to the development of essential knowledge, skills and attitudes in all students and builds on their capacity to view the world critically and to act independently, cooperatively and responsibly.

The introduction of a new approach needs to respond directly to the needs, interests and concerns of students, with appropriate use of explicit teaching, self-directed learning and emerging technologies.

Any new approach needs to be congruent with the prevailing curriculum and standards framework of the system and with student / parent / care-giver / teacher / community expectations.

Monitoring, assessment and reporting

Once a new approach is established, comprehensive and accurate information needs to be provided to Indigenous students and other stakeholders to measure educational progress and to ensure continued learning and development. Again, performance measurement will be seen within the context of the systemic approach to measuring improvement against a standards framework, especially the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks and goals.

Continuous monitoring and recording of Indigenous student progress and achievement in curriculum and social areas are vital in determining whether the introduction of a new approach is successful, especially where there exist explicit statements about what Indigenous students are expected to know, be able to do and demonstrate as a result of the new approach.

The monitoring and assessment of Indigenous students will provide information on which the future direction of the curriculum can be based. This process will be strengthened where Indigenous students, parents and community members provide input to, participate in and reflect on assessment and reporting processes.

The classroom

Teaching strategies and learning styles

All school/community programmes, ongoing and new, should provide multiple creative opportunities for Indigenous students to learn, achieve and reflect on their own learning in a supportive environment in which truth, honesty and a respect for diversity are promoted. The major challenge is to provide structured teaching and learning programmes while responding to young Indigenous people's developmental needs; and at the same time, recognising that some students may need additional assistance periodically.

Of key importance to the successful integration of new approaches into the mainstream of the school curriculum will be educators who know, understand and can work collaboratively with their Indigenous students; have high expectations and standards; and are flexible, risk-taking facilitators who are receptive to innovation. It is also important to recognise that sound teaching practice reflects the ability of the educator to match an appropriate teaching practice to the needs and strengths of the Indigenous learner. Even with the best teaching, some students will need additional support to achieve success. Intervention for Indigenous students at most risk becomes an important consideration and a range of strategies, including one-on-one and small group teaching, individualised learning programmes, mentoring programmes and parent /community support, must be considered.

Classroom organisation

Classroom organisation should recognise differences in learning styles, needs, performance levels, areas of interest and general capacities. The flexibility, productivity and effectiveness sought by the school and the Indigenous community in general should also exist within each classroom.

The model described above provides a context within which school improvement can occur and in which the successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes might be successfully integrated into mainstream provision. The 1998-99 IESIP Strategic Results Projects have provided many examples of initiatives that demonstrate elements of this model.

The model provides a number of entry points for schools and systems, accommodates the different stages that schools are at, and should be regarded as an aid for review, planning and improvement. The model should also be useful in staff professional development and staff selection processes.

It is for the States/Territories and education systems to decide the relevance and potential of the model for schools and consideration should be given to using this model as a basis for the systems to develop their own models where none currently exists or as a comparison with their existing models.

In addition, since most of the success of the 1998-99 IESIP Strategic Results Projects has been gained simply through combining a relentless approach with high expectations and what educators generally regard as good teaching and learning practice, this finding has considerable implications for systems and their allocation of resources and arrangements for teacher professional development, not only in Indigenous programmes but also in mainstream programmes.

Consultation Comments

The Taskforce undertook consultations on the model within their jurisdictions and with some Indigenous communities and found that there was good support for the model. It was clear that the model summarised a range of good generic educational practice and therefore appeared self-evident and not very demanding from some points of view. However, promoting and implementing the model would assist school principals and educational administrators to ensure that the education of Indigenous students is core business.

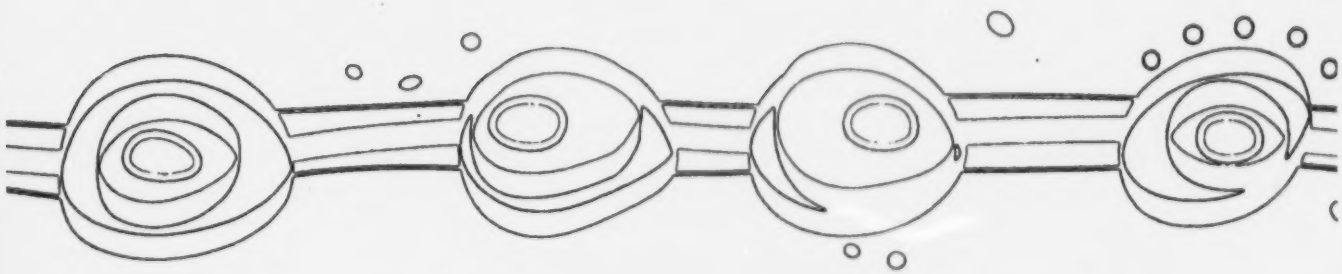
In addition, promoting and implementing the model would encourage jurisdictions to consider and promote the successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes such as the 1998-99 IESIP Strategic Results Projects and undertake further initiatives to support accelerated learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The consultations also indicated the usefulness of the model especially at the local level to underline the value of schooling, to support schools in the challenge of getting better at working with parents of Indigenous students and to show parents, caregivers and the local school community how they can support the school. A strong partnership between the school and community will closely support Indigenous parents and care-givers to jointly progress the standards of education and to be actively involved in the decision-making processes and planning for the introduction of new programmes.

Finally, the consultations noted that the model focussed on supporting current staff and processes and did not refer to the level of pre-service teacher training needed. Pre-service teacher training was necessary at a variety of levels, including Indigenous educational issues, cross-cultural awareness and competencies in teaching 'at risk' Indigenous students. The model may prove useful in supporting discussions on pre-service training within jurisdictions.

CHAPTER FOUR

CROSS-PORTFOLIO FRAMEWORK



This chapter describes the work of the Taskforce to address Term of Reference 1 e) and proposes two models – the Partnership and Education Systems Cubes – to provide a co-ordinating framework for more effective cross-portfolio mechanisms. The Taskforce notes that further work need to be undertaken on the Cubes and recommends their use in cross-portfolio pilots.

Introduction

The lack of an integrated long-term plan for provision of cross-portfolio services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community at the urban, rural, and remote levels has resulted in services not being provided in a cohesive manner.

There is a close relationship between low levels of educational outcomes and issues in other portfolio areas such as poor health, overcrowded housing and poor access to government services and infrastructure, such as transport and information and communication technology, that other Australians take for granted. Any improvement in these other portfolio areas is likely to generate better educational outcomes.

For example, there is a close relationship between poor health outcomes and low levels of educational achievement.

There is some evidence that the infant mortality rate drops by between 7% and 10% with the addition of a single extra year of education in a population. Though the Indigenous infant mortality rate has reduced over the last two decades, it is still three times that of the Australian population as a whole, and there are some communities with higher infant mortality rates.

The incidence of otitis media with effusion (OME) among Indigenous Australian children living in remote communities has been found to range from 40%-70%. OME in advantaged populations around the world is approximately 5% in childhood, falling to less than 1% after age 12. Younger children experience more frequent infectious episodes and eardrum ruptures typically begin within the first three months of life. With repeated ruptures, healing, and re-ruptures, the eardrums become scarred and thickened. In many cases the ruptures become too large to heal and would require reconstructive surgery to repair. Therefore during the early years, which are critical for speech and language development as well as for growth and elaboration of the nerve pathways between the inner ear and the temporal cortex of the brain, the great majority of Indigenous children experience fluctuating hearing loss. Such sensory deprivation during the developmental period subsequently makes it much more difficult for these children to learn.

On the other hand, improvements in Indigenous educational outcomes impact on other portfolio areas and on the total well-being of the Indigenous and national community. Indigenous people are more likely to be sick and less likely to be able to take action in relation to the health of their children, the less education they have relative to the Australian population as a whole.

There is also a great deal of research which shows that education has a positive effect on the health of adults, not just on their children. The effect that education has on people's health occurs to some extent independently of the effect that education has on their income or employment levels. In other words, even if income and employment levels do not increase, there is still a significant improvement in health status, both among adults and especially among their children.

Improvements in Indigenous educational outcomes also impact on other portfolio areas and on the total well-being of the Indigenous and national community. For example, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody noted that the formal education system, child welfare practices, juvenile justice, health and employment opportunities were inextricably linked to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody. The

Commission highlighted a number of educational problems and concluded that the most significant reason for the disproportionate rate of contact was the severely disadvantaged social, economic and cultural position of many Indigenous people.

Nevertheless, since the Royal Commission, the number of Aboriginal prisoners has more than doubled and the number of deaths of Aboriginal men in prison has also risen. Compared to the 1980s, the proportion of deaths in the 20-24 age group has trebled in the 1990s and death from suicide has taken over from illness as the leading manner of death.

Despite the urgency of these issues, there seems to be considerable difficulties in developing efficient mechanisms at State/Territory, national and local levels to resolve these cross-portfolio issues permanently at a local level for Indigenous Australians.

There is a need for a further effort that is both focussed and at different levels, and that promotes more effective partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and more effective intra- and cross-agency co-operation. The ongoing lack of effective cross-portfolio arrangements constitutes a barrier to achieving educational equality.

Historical Context

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 1992 endorsed The National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. A copy of the commitment is in **Appendix 9.**

The objective of the 1992 COAG Commitment was to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people receive no less a provision of services than other Australians. Adherence to this objective should provide the basis for better decisions and guidance on agreed levels of service delivery and outcomes by the three levels of government.

In particular, the 1992 COAG Commitment was designed to achieve greater coordination of the delivery of programs and services by all levels of government to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The 1992 Commitment provided a framework from which some improved service delivery practices especially in the areas of health and housing have flowed in recent years.

In the health area, all governments have agreed to national performance indicators, and with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the indigenous community health sector have entered into Framework Agreements to improve services and outcomes. In the housing and related infrastructure area, agreements have been developed which set out the responsibilities of different government agencies, which include combining resources and developing decision-making roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. More holistic approaches to addressing community concern also exist in areas such as law and justice and in local government services.

The issue of more effective cross-portfolio mechanisms was raised in the 1995 National Review of the effectiveness of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy in its first triennium. The 1995 MCEETYA Taskforce for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples attempted to grapple with the complexities of addressing these cross-portfolio issues and finally recommended that individual State/ Territory education and training systems should address these matters separately.

The Taskforce proposes that it is timely for this issue to be reconsidered at a national level. Similar arrangements to those for health and housing could be developed and implemented for the education and training sector, including identified common points of intersection and agreed collaborative approaches.

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century provides the basis for an agreed collaborative approach by the education and training sector. The goals of the Adelaide Declaration in particular underline the centrality of high-quality schooling in ensuring that every Australian citizen has the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society.

It is critical to develop mechanisms that will break the collective impact of poor health, housing and other infrastructural issues on the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Governments, education providers and other government service and infrastructural providers need to look at new ways of working with each other and with indigenous communities towards a common goal - accelerating the achievement of educational equality for indigenous Australians.

Current work on developing and implementing literacy and numeracy benchmarks for Years 3, 5 and 7, the Statement of Principles and Standards for a More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21st Century and the national work to enhance the performance and monitoring framework for the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme provide an outcomes-based platform for developing more effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

The Taskforce proposes that an overall framework for establishing cross-portfolio objectives, agreed outcomes and performance indicators should be based on the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century and the National Objectives of the 1992 COAG Commitment. This overall framework is elaborated through the 'partnership' and the 'education systems' cubes described below.

Partnership Cube

The failure to achieve educational equality can not only be attributed to poor health, but also to other factors such as poverty, housing, employment, low community participation, lack of communication, high levels of detention, and lack of mainstream services.

To address these issues community, governments and service providers need to work together. The challenge for all levels of government and education and training providers is to deliver a model for 'education for all' within the diverse geographic regions of Australia. These challenges are varied and complex and need to be viewed differently according to geographical location ie urban, rural and remote settings. For example, at the school level, there is a strong and clear relationship between geographical location on one hand, and patterns of educational achievement on the other, with the participation rates of compulsory-school aged children often lower in rural and remote locations. These complexities need to be addressed and the development of effective responses pursued with rigour.

A new partnership model is proposed in order to address the need for rigour in designing new and better approaches to improving educational outcomes. This approach is called the Partnership Cube.

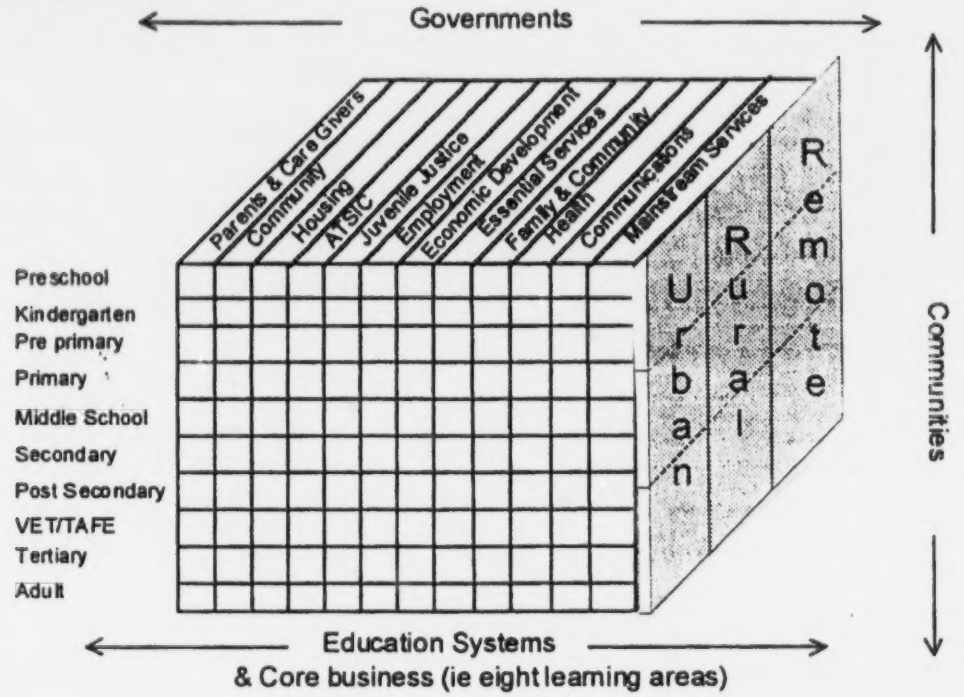
The Partnership Cube focuses on developing stronger partnerships between government, communities and education systems and is designed to provide a diagrammatic representation of these cross-portfolio complexities, at the same time providing a simple framework for identifying the issues and enabling all participants to develop solutions.

Using the Cube will enable jurisdictions to develop a response to a specific problem or shortcoming by:

- identifying needs and establishing clear and measurable objectives, agreed outcomes and performance indicators;

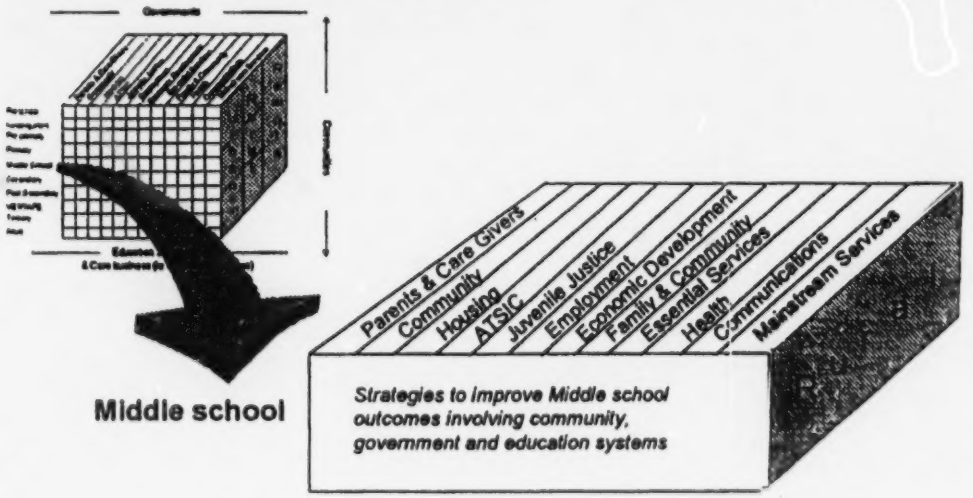
- clearly defining interests and responsibilities of all partners in relation to policy, operations and resources;
- defining and providing focus for the development of co-ordination mechanisms; and
- establishing a basis for agreed processes.

The Partnership Cube



Effective co-ordination in policy development, planning, management, provisions of services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders will achieve more effective and efficient delivery of services, remove unnecessary duplication and will allow more effective use of resources.

Finding ways forward using the Partnership Cube



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The Partnership Cube is designed to enable attention and resources to be focussed on specific elements. For example, as illustrated on page 32, the Cube allows an element to be isolated and analysed in detail, strategies to be developed and achievement of outcomes to be monitored.

In this case the example shows how the development of strategies by all agencies to improve outcomes across key learning areas for middle schools in rural Australia could be approached. The cube essentially shows which stakeholder concerns to address. In short each of these agencies – including parents and community – is a partner working together with other agencies to achieve common outcomes. In the case of middle school, the agencies to consider specifically include housing, juvenile justice and communication. In preschool, agencies such as parents and care givers, family and community services, and health would play active and visible roles to improve educational outcomes.

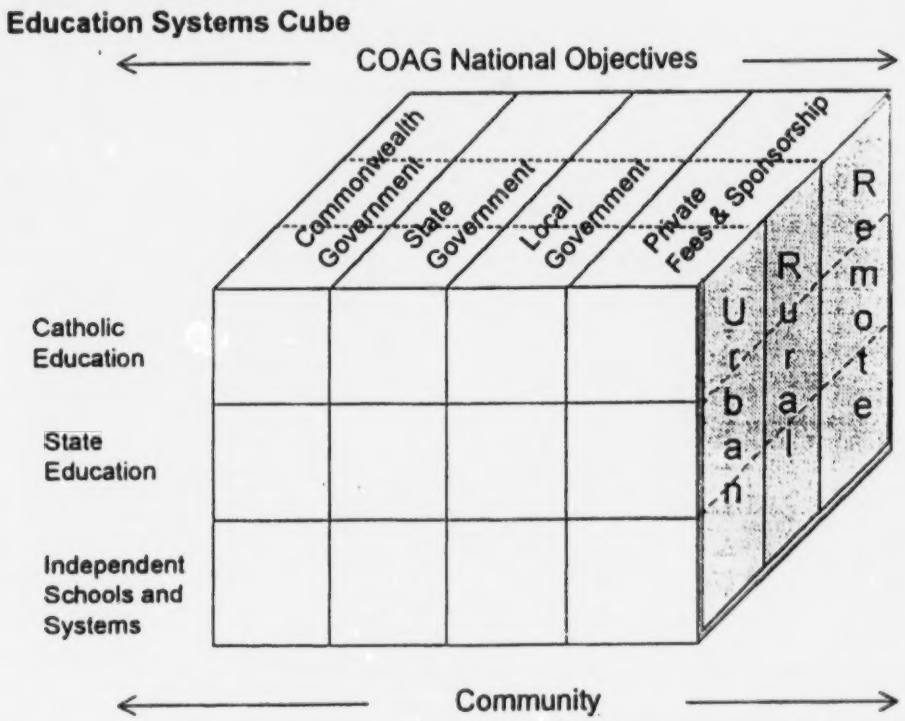
Using the Cube, it should be possible for governments, the community and education providers in specific locations to develop measured and targeted approaches to improving educational outcomes.

Education Systems Cube

The cube approach can be extended further to provide a framework which recognises the many and varied partners within education systems. Extending the Partnership Cube to include the structure of educational provision, as illustrated by the diagram of the Education Systems Cube below, enables further refinement of strategies by education providers.

For example, designing and implementing strategies to improve middle school outcomes in rural areas, will involve different mixes of education providers—State, Catholic, Independent—from region to region. In turn there will be different resourcing requirements and organisational arrangements to co-ordinate the design, implementation, and monitoring of the strategies.

Edcuation Systems Cube



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To extend the Partnership Cube to recognise the different approaches likely to occur is to acknowledge the diversity of education provision in Australia. Service delivery in the post-compulsory years of schooling is particularly complex and diverse. For example, both general education and vocational education and training (VET) are provided by schools and VET providers (government and non-government) with VET also being provided by industries and group training companies.

Use of the cube approach enables approaches that are developed to be visible to other educational providers, governments and communities in other regions of Australia and therefore there is likely to be greater opportunity for the sharing of good practice from region to region across Australia.

It should be noted that the use of the terms 'urban, rural and remote' in the Cubes is not consistent with Australian Bureau of Statistics definitions or the use of these terms by the National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce.

Achieving educational equality through partnership

Both the Partnership and the Education Systems Cubes provide a mechanism to implement coordinated programmes which specify the responsibilities of each government, identify funding arrangements and provide a framework for the planning and delivery of services and programmes in specific functional areas. In addition, the Cubes recognise the significance of protocols already established between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The current performance and monitoring framework for bilateral agreements under the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) provides an initial, viable data base for accountability and educational achievement.

The Partnership Cube could be used to enable the alignment of the IESIP agreement's performance and monitoring framework with similar mechanisms in other areas of government service provision such as housing and health, particularly the existing bilateral agreements in health and housing under the 1992 COAG Commitment. This would assist in addressing the underlying issues which impact on Indigenous children and families in achieving educational outcomes.

Cross-portfolio pilots could focus on specific sites, across urban, rural and remote locations, with varying levels of Indigenous populations and stable and highly mobile populations. These sites would typically contain a number of government and non-government early childhood facilities and schools, where Indigenous students typically achieve at a significantly lower level. The pilots would also inform the development by jurisdictions of multi-lateral agreements for the delivery of services to specific Indigenous communities.

Consultation Comments

The Taskforce undertook consultations on the framework within their jurisdictions and with some Indigenous communities and found that while the framework was still embryonic at this stage, it was supported, particularly in its ability to open up the challenge of cross-portfolio work. The Partnership and Systems Cubes are useful for giving a new perspective and for working out new ways of approaching the issue of developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

Further work needs to done to clarify and support the use of the Cubes by jurisdictions, especially in relation to developing mechanisms for establishing partnerships and for undertaking problem-solving activities. In particular, jurisdictions need to work within existing protocols and at the local level with their educational institutions, parents and caregivers, Indigenous communities and the wider community to establish local strategies and milestones.

There are indications of a lack of expertise in addressing and resolving cross-portfolio issues. There is also some scepticism about the ability of developing better cross-portfolio mechanisms to produce better educational outcomes for Indigenous students and some concern about the capacity of cross-portfolio work to redirect scarce resources away from Indigenous students. Nevertheless the consultations indicate that the establishment of cross-portfolio pilots would be useful in addressing these issues and building expertise in developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

The Taskforce is of the view that circulating this report to the Health and Community Services Ministerial Council and the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs would be useful in encouraging discussions on cross-portfolio issues.

APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION POLICY (1989)

Involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decisionmaking

Goal 1 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of pre-school, primary and secondary education services for their children.

Goal 2 To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal languages.

Goal 3 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Goal 4 To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Goal 5 To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal people to participate in educational decision-making.

Goal 6 To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Aboriginal communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

Equality of access to educational services

Goal 7 To ensure that Aboriginal children of pre-primary school age have access to pre-school services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.

Goal 8 To ensure that all Aboriginal children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

Goal 9 To ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.

Equity of educational participation

Goal 10 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal children in pre-school education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.

Goal 11 To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal children in compulsory schooling.

Goal 12 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes

Goal 13 To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

Goal 14 To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

Goal 15 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

Goal 16 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

Goal 17 To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages.

Goal 18 To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

Goal 19 To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal adults with limited or no educational experience.

Goal 20 To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

Goal 21 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

THE ADELAIDE DECLARATION ON NATIONAL GOALS FOR SCHOOLING IN THE 21ST CENTURY (1999)

The State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met as the 10th Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in Adelaide, 22-23 April 1999, chaired by the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training in South Australia, the Hon Malcolm Buckby MP. Conscious that the schooling of Australia's children is the foundation on which to build our future as a nation, Council agreed to act jointly to assist Australian schools in meeting the challenges of our times. In reaching agreement to address the following areas of common concern, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education made an historic commitment to improving Australian Schooling within a framework of national collaboration.

Preamble

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

This statement of national goals for schooling provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students.

It acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. It also acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children and the central role of teachers in the learning process.

Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Commonwealth, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally .

The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community
- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialling that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued
- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

Goals

1. Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave school, they should:

   1.1 have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities, and to collaborate with others.

   1.2 have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members.

   1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives, and to accept responsibility for their own actions.

   1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life.

   1.5 have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning.

   1.6 be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society.

   1.7 have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development.

   1.8 have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

2. In terms of curriculum, students should have:

   2.1 attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:

   - the arts;
   - English;
   - health and physical education;
   - languages other than English;
   - mathematics;
   - science;

- studies of society and environment; and
- technology.

and the interrelationships between them.

2.2 attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level.

2.3 participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies.

2.4 participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:

3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location.

3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.

3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students.

3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

3.5 all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally.

3.6 all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.

APPENDIX 3

10th MCEETYA MEETING ADELAIDE, 22-23 APRIL 1999

EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES

1.5 Indigenous Education

Council:

a noted the Commonwealth paper on Indigenous Education (paper 1.5/1);

b committed, consistent with Council's previous decision regarding National Literacy and Numeracy Goal, to ensure that all Indigenous children leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level, and that every Indigenous child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years;

c committed to undertaking additional and concerted efforts required to ensuring that Indigenous students achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes in school attendance, retention, grade progression, Indigenous employment, TER and awarding of school certificates, by 2004;

d committed to developing a set of broad national principles for Indigenous education that define and promote high quality standards in educational infrastructure and service delivery to Indigenous students, including standards for access to post-primary schooling; teacher provision, qualifications and professional development; cross-cultural awareness and IT support;

e agreed to undertake work to enhance the current IESIP performance and monitoring framework:

- by developing more consistent performance indicators and targets that permit aggregation for the development of national reports in the following areas:
  - i inclusion of student achievement in 1999 against the national literacy benchmarks for reporting in 2000 and against the numeracy benchmarks for reporting in 2001,
  - ii school attendance, retention, grade progression, Indigenous employment, TER and awarding of school certificates in 2000 for reporting in 2001,
- by identifying the performance improvement targets required to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for reporting in 2004;

f agreed to nominate representatives to a working group to undertake work described in paragraphs 5.1, 5.2, 6.2 and 6.4.

g agreed, consistent with the previous Council decision of April 1998, to report at the first Council meeting in 2000 on efforts to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Australia's Indigenous people within the framework described in paragraph 5.2.

Council also noted the Western Australian paper (1.5/2) on recent achievements and initiatives in relation to Indigenous education in that State and the suggestion by Minister Barnett that other jurisdictions should similarly report on their own achievements and initiatives at the next meeting of MCEETYA.

APPENDIX 4

TASKFORCE MEMBERS

Chair
Mr Tony Greer
First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division
DETYA

Dr Jim McMorrow
Deputy Director-General, Policy and Planning
NSW Department of Education and Training

Mr Bruce Kiloh
Assistant General Manager, Schools Programs
Education Department Victoria

and Ms Susan Dennett (2000)

Mr Shane Williams
Acting Director, Student Support Services
Education Queensland

Mr Mark Williams
Superintendent, Aboriginal Education
SA Department of Education, Training and Employment

and Ms Jillian Miller (2000)

Mr Ken Wyatt
Director, Aboriginal Education
Education Department of Western Australia

Ms Kate Shipway
Acting Director (Equity Standards)
Department of Education, Tasmania

Ms Katherine Henderson
Deputy Secretary, School Services Division
NT Department of Education

Mr Chris Harris
Coordinator, Indigenous Education Unit
ACT Dept of Education & Community Services

Mr Peter Buckskin
Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Education Branch,
C'w DETYA

Mr Michael King
Catholic Education Office
Leederville WA

Mr John Bucknall
Coordinator, Aboriginal Independent Community Schools' Support Unit
Broome WA

and Ms Anna Sinclair (2000)

Ms May O'Brien
Chair
WA Aboriginal Education and Training Council

Mr Lewis Hawke
AGM Commercial
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Dr John McArthur
Secretary, Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs

Executive Officer
Ms Pat McDermott
Indigenous Education Branch
DETYA

APPENDIX 5

TERMS OF REFERENCE

At its 10th meeting on 23 April 1999, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs discussed a range of issues relating to Indigenous education in the school sector and agreed to establish a Working Group to undertake work described in paragraphs 5.1, 5.2, 6.2 and 6.4 of the Commonwealth paper.

The Terms of Reference for the Taskforce are to provide advice to Ministers on:

1. Making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority by:

   (a) reporting on national literacy benchmarks in 2000 from 1999 data and the numeracy benchmarks in 2001 from 2000 data,

   (b) reinforcing the goals for achieving educational equality for Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy within the revised Australian common and agreed goals for schooling,

   (c) improving the relationships between the range of mainstream and specific Indigenous programmes, and ensuring that Indigenous education equality is a priority in mainstream programmes as well as in specifically targeted programmes,

   (d) sustaining, replicating and building upon the successful outcomes of the Strategic Results Projects in mainstream and specific Indigenous education programmes,

   (e) strengthening links between education/training and community development and identifying the implications for employment, health and housing, paying particular attention to specific Indigenous communities, especially those in most need,

   (f) developing a set of broad national principles for Indigenous education that define and promote high quality standards in educational infrastructure and service delivery to Indigenous students, including standards for access to post-primary schooling; teacher provision, qualifications and professional development; cross-cultural awareness and IT support.

2. Enhancing the current performance and monitoring framework for the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme by:

   (a) developing more consistent performance measures, benchmarks and/or targets that permit aggregation for the development of national reports in the following areas:

      (i) inclusion of student achievement in 1999 against the national literacy benchmarks for reporting in 2000 and against the numeracy benchmarks for reporting in 2001,

      (ii) school attendance, retention, grade progression, employment of Indigenous people in schools, TER and awarding of school certificates in 2000 for reporting in 2001,

   (b) identifying the performance measures, benchmarks and/or targets required to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for reporting in 2004.

3. Provide advice to the Commonwealth on the development of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the National Indigenous Students' School Attendance Strategy by end of September 1999.

APPENDIX 6

STATISTICAL DETAILS ON PROGRESS TO DATE

The following data has been gathered from a number of sources including: the Australian Bureau of Statistics five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, Commonwealth DETYA statistical reports, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, attendance data from a 1999 study by Dr Ken Rigby of the University of SA and literacy data from the ACER report on the 1996 National School English Literacy Survey.

The statistics show that inequality in the achievement of equitable access and participation rates and equitable and appropriate educational outcomes still persists.

Access and participation

Overall access and participation rates for Indigenous Australians have improved dramatically over the last thirty years and especially in the last decade, with participation rates in some but not all sectors of education and training either meeting or exceeding the rate for other Australians.

In the last decade the proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over with a formal qualification has increased from 10% in 1991 to 14% in 1996. There has been a strong growth in Indigenous school enrolments with a 40% increase from 1991 to 1998. Enrolments in VET have almost doubled from 1994 to 1998 and enrolments in higher education have increased by about 60% from 1991 to 1998.

An examination of the school participation rates by sector shows that primary school participation is approaching the non-Indigenous rate, with 83% of Indigenous children of primary school age participating in schooling, compared to 89% of non-Indigenous children in 1996.

However, while substantial advances are now being made, significant inequalities in access and participation rates remain.

For example, the current rates of participation disguise significant disparity in terms of the types of courses that may be undertaken by Indigenous students. In addition, participation in secondary schooling has increased from 54% in 1986 to 60% in 1996, but is only slowly improving in relation to the non-Indigenous rate of 84%.

Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes

While access and participation rates are improving, the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes still has a long way to go.

For example, Indigenous students record markedly lower levels in all academic subjects. Of particular concern is their poor literacy achievement which was reinforced by the findings of the 1996 National School English Literacy Survey.

Approximately 70% of all students in Year 3 surveyed met the identified performance standards in reading and writing. Less than 20% of students in the Indigenous sample met the reading standards and less than 30% the writing standards. In addition, the lowest achieving Year 3 Indigenous students made little or no progress over the following two years. There was a similar trend for Year 5 students.

Over time, this situation deteriorates to the point where Indigenous students are often three or four year levels below other students and leave school with the English literacy level of a six-year-old, unemployable outside their own community and almost completely dependent on key non-Indigenous people in very significant aspects of their lives.

This poor performance is not just a reflection of socio-economic and English language background, since 60%-70% of Year 3 students from low socio-economic backgrounds and just over 60% with a language background other than English met the reading and writing standards.

There is considerable debate about the level of consistent attendance required to achieve equitable educational outcomes, but there is little doubt that high levels of absenteeism are linked to lower educational achievements. Absenteeism rates vary considerable across the country depending on geographical location, year of schooling and education system.

From research work currently being undertaken across the primary and secondary years, the general pattern of attendance for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is the same, except that the level of attendance is higher for non-Indigenous students at each year level.

Indigenous school students attend about 84% of the time and non-Indigenous students attend about 93%. This gap widens in secondary school. In Year 10, which is the lowest point in attendance for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, Indigenous students are absent up to three times more often than non-Indigenous students. An examination of the number of days for each student is absent shows that about 24% of all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are present at school every day. However the distribution of days absent indicates that a comparatively high proportion of Indigenous students were absent from school for a greater number of days per term.

Indigenous students are much less likely to continue their education beyond the compulsory years. Twelve years of schooling are now the expected norm for Australians; it is disturbing to find that the apparent retention rate to Year 12 for Indigenous students across the nation is less than half that for other students. In 1998, 83% of Indigenous students remained in schooling to Year 10, but only 32% to year 12 compared to 73% for non-Indigenous students. There is general concern about the lacklustre trend in the overall Year 12 retention rate, but regardless of any changes in the rate over the last decade, nationally the Year 12 retention rate for Indigenous students stays at less than half that for other students.

Rates for both Year 10 and Year 12 retention for Indigenous students vary considerably across the country and in some cases are worse than the national rate. For example, Commonwealth programme data shows that the apparent retention rate for Indigenous students to Year 10 in some parts of the country is just over 50% in 1997, compared to just over 80% for all Australian Indigenous students and compared to just under 100% for non-Indigenous students. In addition, in some parts of the country, in 1997, while only 30% of Indigenous students remain in schooling to Year 12, only a quarter of these students successfully completed Year 12, compared to 50% of non-Indigenous Year 12 students.

Indigenous students, 15 years and over, are less likely to achieve a post-school qualification with currency in the labour market. While the level has increased from 10% in 1991 to 14% in 1996, there is considerable room for improvement in relation to the total population level of 34% in 1996.

Demographic and employment statistics

Statistics relating to the demographic characteristics and employment of the Indigenous population have implications for the achievement of educational equality.

Half the Indigenous population is aged under 25 years. Indigenous people are generally much younger than non-Indigenous Australians. At 30 June 1996, Australia's Indigenous population had an average age of 20.1, 14 years less than that for the total population (34 years).

The 1996 Census also showed that the Indigenous population is currently expanding a rate more than twice that of the total population, with an average rate of growth of around 2.3%. The population is projected to grow between 1996 and 2001 from 368,000 to 469,000, a 21.5% increase.

The combination of the current employment profile of Indigenous peoples and the demographic characteristics of the population have implications for future unemployment rates (possibly as high as 47% by 2006). If Community Development Employment projects (CDEP) and mainstream employment rates continue as they are, by the year 2001 about 28 000 Indigenous persons will be unemployed (an increase of about 6 000 on 1996 figures), with about a further 140 000 Indigenous persons not in the labour force (an increase of about 30 000 on 1996 figures).

Indigenous unemployment costs Australian society *(Taylor, J. and Hunter, B. The Job Still Ahead: Economic costs of continuing Indigenous employment disparity, ATSIC, September 1998)*:

- the direct cost of meeting the basic income support of those who want to work but cannot find jobs ($0.8 billion in 1996; estimated to rise to $1.1 billion in 2006);
- forgone tax revenue estimated at $177 million by 2006 if parity in labour force status is not achieved. Shifting all Indigenous Australians who want to work from welfare dependence to unsubsidised employment would increase tax revenue by $250 million (in 1996 dollars);
- forgone earnings. It is estimated that in 1994, Indigenous Australian workers would have had to earn $440 million more to have had the same average income as other workers.

One of the major labour market disadvantages experienced by Indigenous people is their relatively low levels of education. If Indigenous people had the same level of qualification as non-Indigenous Australians, then their rate of employment could increase significantly. For example, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research *(Taylor, J., Speech to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council, April 1998)* has pointed out that:

- completing Year 10 or 11 increases an Indigenous person's chance of employment by 40%;
- completing Year 12 increases employment prospects by a further 13%;
- having a post-secondary qualification increases employment prospects by between 13% and 23%).

However, even where young Indigenous Australians achieve the same levels of educational qualification as their non-Indigenous counterparts, they subsequently experience higher rates of unemployment – even when geographic and other differences are taken into account, and this may be due to racism.

Further, an unemployment rate of up to three or four times that for other Australians and a high incidence of generational unemployment makes it difficult to argue the benefits of a good education for Indigenous Australians.

APPENDIX 7

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Introduction

For thousands of years, Australia's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have incorporated into their languages and cultures their own processes, protocols and practices for transmitting, sharing and assessing their heritage and knowledge. The methods of transmission are through the spoken word, visual imagery and ceremony.

In addition, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples each have rich diverse heritages, languages, cultures and knowledge built upon their relationship with each other and their ecologies that have resulted in diverse traditions, beliefs, customs and ceremonies.

In an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander context, teaching is generally undertaken by groups of Elders and adults, rather than by one teacher. Education is about 'knowing', rather than acquiring knowledge; about being independent and equal, while knowing respect and place; engaging in personal relationships within the family and group structure; learning about the centredness of life; and preparing to be a useful and responsible member of the family and group. Caring for others is modelled and valued, so the learning process transcends chronological boundaries of age and is deemed an individual experience.

Structure of formal education and training

With the arrival of Europeans, a different form of education was introduced into Australia and while it has undergone a number of transformations, the structure, processes, protocols and practices of this education are different from education within an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander context, with the dominant method of transmission through the written word.

The structure of formal education and training is based on the following assumptions:

- A very substantial part of childhood and adolescence will be spent in formal education settings and on formal education and training work at home. This assumption is supported by legal compulsion (to certain ages) on the basis that the outcomes of formal education reflect a common good, for both individuals and the community.
- Groupings of students will occur, largely by age cohort, with a directive and authoritative adult in charge; and within that cohort a relatively common range of abilities and rate of progress will be found.
- Development and growth occur in a reasonably consistent pattern, both generally and within formal education and training.
- Success in formal education and training will be based on consistent, disciplined, physically passive effort and work over a sustained period of time and will be related to forms of 'life success', whether utilitarian/material (in terms of paid employment, for example) or intrinsic (in terms of personal development).

Issues

The assumptions of formal education and training have been challenged in various ways and at various times by close analysis of their anomalies and the establishment of alternative practices.

One of the most notable sets of alternative practices is the recent development of teaching and learning practices that focus on students being flexible, adaptive and self-directed in terms of their current, later and lifelong learning needs.

These practices involve educators in building a relationship with each student, studying the values of each student, and then creating an developmental learning environment in which the students concerned undertake activities which are important to them. It means focussing on the students and the qualities and competencies to be fostered instead of on the knowledge or content to be conveyed. It means providing a more explicit curriculum; rich and appropriate learning situations; a clearer relationship between school, home and community; something more meaningful and tangible to strive for; and more hands-on practice, interwoven with subject knowledge.

Nonetheless, the influence of these alternative practices is limited and the influence of assumptions of formal education and training and their structural and practical consequences is profound, especially for the likelihood of educational success for many Indigenous students.

Many Indigenous students come to formal education and training with little or none of the cultural capital that their non-Indigenous peers take for granted. Certainly, many Indigenous students bring with them rich cultural capital, but it is rarely of the sort valued by the formal educational system. Many bring with them knowledge of, and familiarity with, Indigenous culture and its institutions, but this cultural competence has little currency in systems of education.

On the other hand, many Indigenous students are poor in their own Indigenous cultural capital and do not value their cultural background often because of the break-up of Indigenous families and communities, the loss of Indigenous culture, the demise of many languages and the breakdown in the Elder teaching process. This raises issues for many schools about how to support the teaching of Indigenous culture, whether within school hours or outside school.

Regardless of their own level of Indigenous cultural capital, many Indigenous students find the cultural assumptions of formal education puzzling, frustrating and alienating. Nevertheless, within many Indigenous communities there is a strong, but not unreserved, recognition of the importance of formal education and training.

Clearly, for many Indigenous people, participation in education is an attempt to acquire cultural capital that is convertible to economic capital in the dominant economy.

On the other hand, formal education poses a complex cultural problem for many Indigenous individuals and their communities – it has advanced the individual to the point where the individualisation of what were once communal societies is now widespread. For the past two hundred years, formal education has been not only Australian society's tool for change but also the mechanism of domination and colonisation. No Indigenous student ever escapes this realisation and all feel its pressure.

Performing successfully in mainstream education requires more than just a desire to acquire cultural capital that is convertible to economic capital. A number of other things, often taken for granted by those for whom education is expected or assumed, may be difficult for some Indigenous students to obtain. For example, for many Indigenous students who live at home, study and storage space is often a problem because, in comparison to most non-Indigenous households, Indigenous households tend to be more crowded and space is at a premium. The social traffic is busier and privacy often unavailable; such obstacles present major challenges to those who wish to undertake study.

In addition, Indigenous senior secondary students are almost always the first members of the family to enrol in this form of education. Consequently, family expectations about what types of support

are needed are often very different from the expectations of non-indigenous families. The alternative – moving away from the family – is a culturally drastic solution even when it is economically viable. Most indigenous students need more, not less, social support as they contend with a culturally unfamiliar and difficult educational experience.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students ground their choices in education at least in part on evaluations of cultural costs and benefits which may not always align with the calculations of rates of return employed by non-indigenous students. Their choices appear to be related at least in part to attempts to minimise cultural costs and acquire cultural capital of value in their own communities.

School to work transition

Many of these issues discussed above become apparent in the choices that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make in relation to school to work transition.

The transition from school to work or the concept of school to work pathways implies a progression through time, following a plan and heading towards a destination. Most transitions between the various levels of education, or between schooling and work, occur more or less automatically for most young people.

However, many indigenous students have a fractured pattern of education and employment participation and the connections between school education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and experiences, and post-school options are often not automatically apparent for indigenous students. A disproportionately high number of indigenous students are 'at risk of not completing year 12' and are more liable to suspension and exclusion from school.

As a consequence many indigenous students find the pathways in education, training and employment are limited and poorly defined and have difficulty in successfully negotiating the transition from school to work. Therefore there are a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in second chance vocational education and training (VET) courses and in short-term, part-time and low-paid employment.

The labour market is changing and over the next decade will require increasingly higher levels of skills and greater flexibility from its future employees. Not only do young people need to have the knowledge, skills and understandings to make them employable, but they also need productive work habits, personal confidence, decision-making skills and a commitment to learning as well as specific vocational skills. In addition, there is a decline in employment in goods-based sectors such as primary industries and manufacturing, and an increase in employment in knowledge and service-based sectors such communications, retail and financial services.

In making a successful transition from school to work, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have difficulty in competing with the increasing volume of other Australians with post-compulsory educational qualifications and in managing the changes in the nature of the job market.

Recent work shows that school to work transition can be improved for indigenous students by implementing alternative teaching and learning practices in such a way as to build on the cultural capital of the students. Apart from focussing on the students and the qualities and competencies that need to be fostered, school to work transition can be more successfully negotiated by:

- designing and delivering courses that are tailored to meet local needs, have a high degree of flexibility and are undertaken in cooperation with a number of parties including: schools, higher educational institutions, VET providers (public and private), indigenous communities, employers (individually or in association), and local government;

- providing information about careers and development of individual plans that identify student goals and map pathways through school and post-school education and training options and employment;
- increasing cultural support through the provision of Indigenous adult support (either by mentoring and/or access to role models) and by building and affirming cultural identity through the conduct of camps and excursions;
- providing extensive periods of work experience placements even in geographically remote locations with limited job opportunities; and
- maintaining sufficient flexibility to meet difficulties associated with the lack of qualified and appropriate VET trainers, the lack of locally accessible training facilities and accommodation for visiting trainers, limited opportunities for local work placements, and the high costs of student travel and accommodation.

Despite the increased focus in this work on individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the explicit links between the students' cultural capital and their local Indigenous community has allowed many Indigenous young people to function as role models and 'explorers' for their communities, break new ground and challenge unfounded stereotypical views of Indigenous people.

APPENDIX 8

PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES OF STRATEGIC RESULTS PROJECTS

Introduction

In 1997, the Commonwealth offered education providers the opportunity to demonstrate that improvements in Indigenous student learning outcomes can occur in a relatively short space of time through concerted efforts. In 1998 and 1999, a large number of Strategic Results Projects (SRP) were funded under the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme.

A final report on the 1998-99 Strategic Results Projects, together with a resource for teachers of Indigenous students on effective teaching and learning practice, is expected to be available in early 2000. This analysis is based on a preliminary discussion paper circulated at the SRP conference in June 1999.

In brief, most of the success of the SRPs has been gained through combining a relentless approach with high expectations and with what educators generally regard as good teaching and learning practice.

There is no single or short list of successful replicable strategies. A wide variety of strategies were used to cater for the diversity of student learning needs, the diversity of teacher experience and the requirements of the local community. In many cases, strategies that were successful in one place were unsuccessful in others.

Preliminary advice from the SRPs identified three principles that were addressed separately and holistically: 'culture', 'participation' and 'skills'.

Principle of 'culture'

The principle of 'culture' can be described in two ways:

1. by promoting a **model of 'shared responsibility'** where school principals, teachers education workers, parents, caregivers, Indigenous children and the wider community generate a climate that expects and supports Indigenous children to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;
2. by **teaching for lifelong learning** that builds on the strong links for Indigenous students between land, language and culture as it relates to time, relationship and place and position in society.

Promoting the model of 'shared responsibility' in a culturally inclusive way means that:

- formal education and training institutions and systems provide a climate that welcomes all students, and that expects and supports them to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;
- parents, caregivers and the wider community provide a climate that encourages and supports children to 'crack the code' of formal education and training and to get a 'good start in life';
- all children consistently attend formal education and training, are actively engaged and participating in a meaningful and confident manner, and are fluent in the language of the classroom.

The model of 'shared responsibility' can be achieved by:

- working on agreed local educational priorities by ensuring a significant level of formal local Indigenous community involvement at a management level;
- ensuring a significant Indigenous adult presence in the classroom either as teachers, tutors, researchers or other education workers.

Teaching for lifelong learning in a culturally inclusive way can be achieved by:

- identifying students' background knowledge, skills and interests;
- increasing the cultural relevance of the curriculum by allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to:
  - gain an understanding of both holistic and compartmentalised world views as part of the foundation for learning,
  - re-position their cultures, languages, histories, spiritual beliefs and lifestyles in the current educational context in a way which affirms identity and the ability to operate in cross-cultural situations,
  - conceptualise the strong links of land, language and culture as it relates to time, relationship and place and position in society;
- responding to different learning styles by developing teachers' understanding of the range of learning strategies which might be found in any group of students and ensuring that, in conventional teaching practice, these are identified and employed;
- building a community of peers, especially in schools where there is only a small number of Indigenous students; for example, through grouping practices within an institution, by running an excursion or camping programme drawing students from different schools, or by setting up 'companionable' electronic networks where students exchange experiences and information or creating a physical space where Indigenous students, their parents and members of communities could feel comfortable;
- making use of location and the strong links for Indigenous students between land, language and culture;
- confronting the often high rate of mobility by developing administrative arrangements to locate mobile students and support schools in ensuring that the students adapt to their new setting as quickly as possible;
- promoting parity of esteem between Standard Australian English and Indigenous languages and dialects, as well as promoting the maintenance or revival of a number of Indigenous languages currently in decline, by producing teaching and learning resource materials in various languages and ensuring a significant level of formal local Indigenous community involvement at a management level and in delivery.

Principle of 'participation'

An array of strategies was used to effectively engage the participation of Indigenous students, especially prior to and at school entry, as well as in the key transition zone in the middle secondary school years.

In general, critical to achieving success in addressing the issue of 'participation' was the use of intensive, explicit and student-focussed approaches.

intensive, explicit and student-focussed work sometimes comes at a cost to other learning activities, though this cost is generally believed to be acceptable. Crucial to the success of such work is:

- the level of support provided together by teachers, education workers and other adults and the placement of these periods of intensive work at consistent times during the school week;
- more intensive investigation of students' cultural backgrounds;
- consistent and close monitoring of change and progress.

Two key characteristics of this student-focussed work are their attention to a wide range of issues and the intensity of their efforts. The most intensive efforts took a case management approach. This included home visits and other forms of community liaison; an emphasis on personal contact with consistent follow-up where absence occurred; personal planning and goal-setting; some work-related studies and experiences; support with academic work; linkages (actual and/or electronic) with other students in similar situations; and counselling and mediation where problems were occurring. These projects also frequently made use of alternative settings for a part of the week which were 'home' for the students involved.

Indigenous student participation can also be improved by promoting the model of 'shared responsibility'. Apart from advice provided above, 'shared responsibility' can be promoted by supporting participation at, and prior to school entry, and supporting participation and attendance especially during the middle secondary school years when departure from formal education becomes more pronounced.

Indigenous student interest and involvement can also be successfully addressed by:

- using aspects of the case management approach, including personal planning and goal-setting, mentoring, and access to 'taster' courses in the vocational education and training area, especially those with a work skills course component;
- modifying courses and course delivery, especially customising existing courses so that they were more effective for the target group; and/or developing (or searching out) courses to serve the same function; and developing new forms of mobile delivery to teach on site;
- increasing the level and quality of contact between adults (not necessarily teachers) and young indigenous people by:
  - establishing closer and less formal personal relationships between teachers and students;
  - establishing a more informal and less regimented climate;
  - using information and communication technology as a tool within a developmental learning environment to foster participation;
  - providing a larger role for students in negotiation of work;
  - teaching so that success can be regularly and obviously achieved.

Principle of 'skills'

Overall conclusions indicate that high expectations to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes are vital and that improvement in skills development is linked to performance indicators and targets in literacy, numeracy and attendance that compare indigenous achievements in terms of non-indigenous levels of achievement.

High expectations are reflected in a number of ways:

- choosing curriculum resources that are age-appropriate rather than choosing ones that reflect the current skill levels of the student;

- designing tasks with clear goals and targets in terms of mainstream education that show gains in progress;
- paying attention to the role of language and to understanding appropriate concepts in Indigenous language and in Standard Australian English;
- using information and communication technology to upgrade and extend the students' learning environments.

Comparison of Indigenous student achievements should be set where appropriate in terms of the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks, state-wide testing regimes, achievement in terms of the national profile levels in English, mathematics, LOTE, and ESL profiles, achievement in terms of the Key Competencies, or in comparison to competencies of non-Indigenous children at the same age and at the same or in similar locations.

The SRPs indicated that linking improvement in skills development to improvement on the baseline did not accelerate achievement in general, because it did not promote the expectation that Indigenous students could achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

The SRPs also identified a range of issues that need to be addressed in relation to literacy, numeracy and attendance.

Literacy

Low teacher, student and parent expectations of success in education, low levels of academic activity in the classroom, a focus on behaviour management, rather than teaching, difficulties in accommodating the diversity of student learning needs and irregular attendance were issues common to the literacy SRPs.

Standard mainstream literacy practices assume culturally-embedded literacy understandings and do not adequately support Indigenous students to become effective readers and writers. In addition, hearing impairments present a severe impediment to the development of English literacy for all students, but especially for Indigenous students for whom Standard Australian English may not be a first or even a second language.

Numeracy

The issues relating to literacy also need to be addressed to improve numeracy levels of achievement. The development of Indigenous students' understanding in and the use of Standard Australian English as the language of mathematics is crucial for achieving proficiency. However, literacy alone will not ensure numeracy. Mathematical concepts and practices appear to be more culturally embedded, compared to literacy, and there is some disagreement over whether 'chance and data' and 'algebra' are alien to Indigenous world views.

Attendance

Indigenous students attend school less consistently than their non-Indigenous peers and are more likely to drop out. There are many reasons for this situation, but 'cultural alienation' ranks high on the list. Poor attendance, with its associated knowledge gaps, creates classroom situations where students are not coping, become disruptive, face reduced on-task time and generally experience greater disciplinary intervention. Disciplinary action makes school unattractive and further reduces the chances of success. Many systems require high levels of attendance before awarding Year 10 completion certificates. There is also some evidence to suggest a positive correlation between educationally significant hearing impairment and attendance patterns.

APPENDIX 9

NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO IMPROVED OUTCOMES IN THE DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

ENDORSED BY THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 7 DECEMBER 1992

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Heads of Government at the Special Premiers' Conference in October 1990 called for a report on the means of achieving greater coordination of the delivery of programs and services by all levels of government to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The Heads of Government in May 1992 endorsed the development of a multilateral national commitment to improved outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and have agreed on the need to achieve greater coordination of the delivery of programs and services by all levels of government to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

2. PURPOSE

The Governments of Australia:

2.1 recognise the expressed wish of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders for a commitment to change, and an acknowledge of their rightful place in and right to contribute to Australian society and to share in Australia's land, wealth and resources;

2.2 recognise that a National Commitment to improved outcomes in the delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders is required to:

a) redress the underlying and fundamental causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality and disadvantage including those identified by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody;

b) confirm that the planning and provision of government programs and services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders is a shared responsibility and a legitimate policy interest of all spheres of government;

c) agree upon key principles and national objectives; and

d) provide a framework for bilateral agreements to be entered into between governments for the delivery of specific programs and services.

3. NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The Governments of Australia agree to:

Land

3.1 address the issue of land needs and entitlements;

Culture and Heritage

3.2 empower Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to protect, preserve and promote their cultures and heritage, recognising that their unique cultures are Australia's indigenous heritage;

Economic Development

3.3 promote and encourage the development of greater economic independence and self-reliance within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;

Social Well-being

3.4 improve the health and social well-being of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, with particular attention to:

a) health;

b) community housing and infrastructure;

c) education and training;

d) employment;

e) community development;

f) municipal services and infrastructure;

g) law and justice;

h) young people's services;

i) aged care; and

j) child care;

Government Services

3.5 ensure that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders receive no less a provision of services than other Australian citizens and in so doing aim to provide:

a) improved access of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to mainstream programs;

b) services which are adequate and culturally appropriate;

c) appropriate information about their rights to and availability of services;

d) effective resourcing of services; and

e) Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and communities with the opportunity to negotiate, manage or provide their own services.

4. PRINCIPLES

The Government of Australia, in making this National Commitment, have as guiding principles:

4.1 empowerment, self-determination and self-management by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

4.2 economic independence and equity being achieved in a manner consistent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and cultural values;

4.3 the need to negotiate with and maximise participation by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders through their representative bodies, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Regional Councils, State and Territory advisory bodies and community-based organisations in the formulation of policies and programs that affect them;

4.4 effective coordination in the formulation of policies, and the planning, management and provision of services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders by governments to achieve more effective and efficient delivery of services, remove unnecessary duplication and allow better application of available funds; and

4.5 increased clarity with respect to the roles and responsibilities of the various spheres of government through greater demarcation of policy, operational and financial responsibilities.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENTS

The Governments of Australia:

5.1 affirm that this National Commitment arise from their shared responsibility for the development of national policy, for planning, for funding, and for the provision of government programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

5.2 agree that this National Commitment provides the framework for a series of bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments; and

5.3 acknowledge resource constraints in the provision of services and the need to ensure such constraints are managed equitably across the community.

Commonwealth Government

The Governments of Australia:

5.4 acknowledge that the Commonwealth Government has accepted a special responsibility for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders following the amendment of the Australian Constitutions pursuant to the referendum of 1967;

5.5 recognise that the Commonwealth has a special responsibility arising from Australia's international obligations to its indigenous peoples;

5.6 recognise that the Commonwealth's special responsibility is exercised through the development and implementation of policies, the enactment of legislation and the funding of programs and services; and

5.7 recognise the coordinating and advisory role of ATSIC at the Commonwealth level to ensure the Commonwealth's activities are integrated with State/Territory and Local Government programs and service delivery and to act as a Commonwealth focus for the National Commitment to plan and develop programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

State/Territory Governments

The Governments of Australia:

5.8 agree that State and Territory Governments, recognising their role in delivering services, will maintain their responsibility for providing mainstream and Aboriginal-specific programs and services which are responsive to and appropriate to the special needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and will where appropriate adapt and extend those services in consultation with them;

5.9 agree that States and Territories will negotiate effective linkages and coordination between mainstream services and community-based services to facilitate access by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to the full range of programs and services;

5.10 agree that States and Territories will facilitate negotiation and participation by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in the management and delivery of programs and services;

5.11 agree that States and Territories in conjunction with the Commonwealth will ensure coordination in the planning, management and delivery of programs and services; and

5.12 accept that agreements entered into by the States of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia with the Commonwealth pursuant to the *Aboriginal Affairs (Arrangements with the States) Act 1973* will be replace by this National Commitment and bilateral agreements entered into pursuant to it between the Commonwealth and respective States and Territories.

Local Government

The Governments of Australia

5.13 agree that Local Governments will maintain their responsibilities to ensure the provision of a full range of local government services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in accordance with appropriate planning, coordination and funding mechanisms;

5.14 recognise the role of Local Governments in local area planning and the need for its integration with ATSIC and State and Territory planning processes; and

5.15 agree that the development of bilateral agreements will take into account Local Government policies through consultative processes where appropriate.

6. FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

Planning

The Governments of Australia:

6.1 affirm their commitment to a planning framework which:

a) identifies needs, and establishes clear and measurable objectives, agreed outcomes and performance indicators;

b) clearly defines interests and responsibilities of each sphere of government in relation to policy, operations and funding;

c) defines and assists coordination mechanisms; and

d) is based on agreed processes between local communities and governments;

6.2 agree that the planning and delivery of services will take into account the planning role of Regional Councils established under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989 and that in turn ATSIC will take into account the planning processes and advisory bodies established by State, Territory and Local Governments; and that Regional Councils are encouraged to consult with all spheres of government in the formulation of their regional plans;

6.3 accept that Regional Plans prepared by Regional Councils under the ATSIC Act provide one basis for negotiated agreements for the delivery of program and services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; and

6.4 will endeavour to assist and support Regional Council planning processes by maintaining and enhancing linkages and coordination between ATSIC Regional Councils and State and Territory statutory advisory bodies where they exist and other existing government planning and advisory processes and agreed program delivery mechanisms of governments.

Funding

The Governments of Australia:

6.5 recognise the need for all governments to at least maintain total current effort on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs if the disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are to be overcome and their needs met;

6.6 recognise the need for improvements in funding relationships between the Commonwealth, States, Territories and Local Government to achieve more effective and efficient delivery of services, remove unnecessary duplication and allow better application of available funds;

6.7 agree that where administrative responsibility under an agreement resides primarily with one level of government, it will be fully and fairly compensated for carrying out that responsibility;

6.8 agree that sustained levels of Commonwealth funding will be based on the principle of the Commonwealth continuing to have a special responsibility in Aboriginal Affairs, including, where appropriate, the provision of funds and resources under agreements;

6.9 affirm that the Commonwealth's special responsibility in Aboriginal Affairs will be exercised through:

a) seeking to maintain real funding to Commonwealth line agencies for Aboriginal specific programs and mainstream programs for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders where these continue to be provided by the Commonwealth;

b) continuing to support ATSIC at real levels of funding;

c) the disbursement of grants to the States and Territories under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989*;

d) the broadbanding of funding to the States and Territories under agreements which ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs are targeted and allow maximum flexibility to the government providing the service; and

e) the development of joint strategic initiatives in cooperation with State and Territory Governments under agreed arrangements to continue to address areas of special need;

6.10 agree that funding arrangements negotiated in agreements will take into account the diversity of cultural and locational needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; and

6.11 agree to specify in advance, subject to normal budgetary provisions, their respective contributions to the funding of activities identified in agreements.

Delivery of Services

The Governments of Australia:

6.12 acknowledge that each sphere of government has a legitimate interest and responsibility to deliver services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

6.13 recognise that the cultural diversity of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders requires flexibility and adaptability in service delivery;

6.14 agree to maximise discretion and flexibility for the States/Territories and Local Government in service delivery consistent with agreed national objectives and the coordination of planning processes at Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local Government levels;

6.15 recognise a preferred role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the delivery of programs and services; and

6.16 agree that where it is more appropriate to deliver services through government agencies, planning and consultation processes and delivery mechanisms should be adapted to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and communities in consultation with them.

Agreements

The Governments of Australia:

6.17 agree that bilateral agreements be entered into between the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments specifying the responsibilities of each government, identifying funding arrangements and providing a framework for the planning and delivery of services and programs in specific functional areas within the respective States/Territories;

6.18 agree that bilateral agreements entered into between the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments will take account of the important roles played by ATSIC and State/Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations;

6.19 agree that in the negotiation of bilateral agreements, Local Government will be consulted where appropriate on the planning, management and delivery of services;

6.20 agree that bilateral agreements be consistent with national objectives as established in the National Commitment and include:

a) agreed objectives;

b) financial arrangements;

c) procedures for monitoring objectives and outcomes;

d) provision for cooperative arrangements to accommodate developments favoured by one or more spheres of government;

e) provision for nationally consistent statistical reports with a policy orientation;

f) respective roles and responsibilities of parties subject to the agreement; and

g) the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the delivery of programs and services;

6.21 agree that agreements will identify more streamlined and coordinated approaches to planning and funding arrangements; and

6.22 agree that arrangements for particular projects or programs may be developed between ATSIC and State and Territory Governments or Local Governments and be the subject of agreements. These will conform to the principles set out in the multilateral National Commitment and any relevant bilateral agreements.

7. REPORTING AND REVIEW

The Governments of Australia:

7.1 agree that the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council (AAAC) review annually progress in the achievement of improved outcomes in the delivery or programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; and

7.2 affirm their commitment to accountability in the provision of programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

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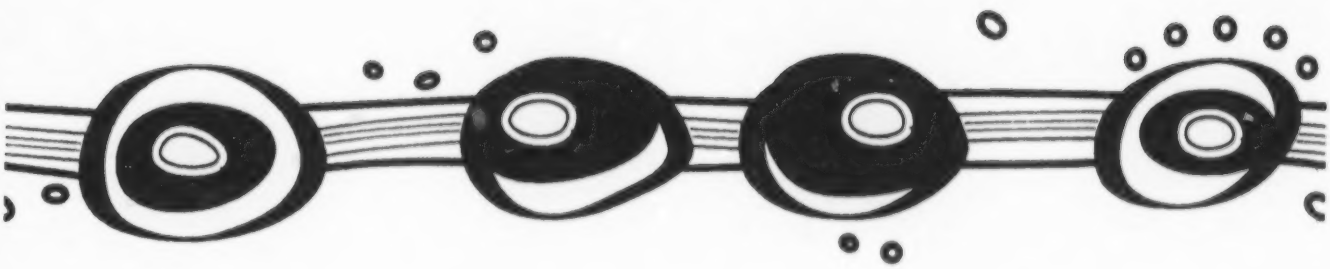

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